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reply ready for every argument urged by Carolstadt, and bewildered his hearers by his memory and skill. More than once, when Carolstadt was near giving way under his powerful declamation, Melancthon whispered a word, or slipped him a piece of paper, on which the answer was written. Eckius having perceived this on one occasion, and feeling indignant that this grammarian, as he called him, should dare to interfere in the discussion, turned towards him, and said haughtily, "Hold your tongue, Philip; mind your studies, and do not disturb me." Perhaps Eckius at that time foresaw how formidable an opponent he would afterwards find in this young man.

The calm Melancthon easily detected the weak points of the discussion. "We cannot help feeling surprised," said he, with that wisdom and beauty which characterized almost all his words, "when we think of the violence with which these subjects were treated. How could any one expect to derive any profit from it? The Spirit of God loves retirement and silence; it is thus that He penetrates deep into our hearts."

The result of the Leipsic disputation, however, produced a deep and permanent impression upon Melancthon's mind. Till that time literature had been his sole occupation. The conference gave him a new impulse, and launched the eloquent professor into the career of theology. From that hour his extensive learning bowed before the word of God. He received the truths of the Gospel with the simplicity of a child, explained the doctrines of salvation with a grace and clearness that charmed all his hearers, and trod boldly in the new faith opened out before him; for, said he, "Christ will never abandon His own followers."

The imprudence of Eckius first called forth the powers of Melancthon as a theological writer. Eckius published a letter relating to the discussion of Leipsic, in which he spoke contemptuously of Melancthon as "a grammarian of Wittenberg." Melancthon, in his reply, at once fastened on the question, which is the central point of the whole controversy with the Church of Rome, the question of the Rule of Faith. He showed, in the clearest manner, that we ought not to interpret Scripture by the Fathers, but the Fathers by Scripture. "How often has not Jerome been mistaken!" said he; "how frequently Ambrose! how often their opinions are different! and how often they retract their errors! There is but one Scripture inspired by the Holy Ghost, and pure and true in all things."

"Luther," he continues, "does not follow certain ambiguous explanations of the ancients, and why should he? When he explains the passage of St. Matthew—'Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church,' he says the same thing as Origen, who alone is a host, as Augustine in his homily, and as Ambrose in his sixth book upon St. Luke. I will mention no others. What, then (it may be asked), will you say that the Fathers contradict one another? and is there anything astonishing in that? I believe in the Fathers because I believe in Scripture. The meaning of Scripture is to be obtained by comparing Scripture with Scripture; it is deduced from the thread and connection of the discourse. There is a philosophy that is enjoined us as regards holy Scripture, and that is, to bring all human opinions and maxims to it as to a touchstone by which to try them."

For a very long period such powerful truths had not been set forth with so much clearness. The Word of God was restored to its place, and the Fathers to theirs. The simple method by which we may arrive at the real meaning of Scripture was firmly laid down. Melancthon furnished the means of replying to all those who, like Eckius, should perplex this subject, even to the most distant times. The feeble grammarian had risen up, and the broad and sturdy shoulders of the Romish champion had bent under the first movement of his arm.

In 1521, Melancthon published his valuable work, entitled, "Common-places of Theology," which passed through sixty editions in its author's lifetime. It contained a summary of Christian doctrine, in which the truths asserted by the Reformers were reduced to a system, and thus more easily inculcated. The subjects of difference with the Roman Church were distinctly stated, with reference to Scriptural proofs, and without controversial argument—a method of persuasion better suited to moderate minds than the most eloquent and impassioned appeals. Luther pronounced the strongest eulogy on this production of his friend. He ranked it incomparably higher than the writings of the Fathers, and pronounced it to be the best book he had ever seen, except the Bible.

From this time the personal history of Melancthon is identified with that of the Reformation. He shared in all the labours of Luther and the other Reformers; and his pen was incessantly exercised to explain their own views, or to refute the attacks of their opponents. The well known "Confession of Augsburg," which was presented to the Emperor Charles V., at the diet held in that city in 1530, and which embodied the chief doctrines of the

Reformation, proceeded mainly from Melancthon's pen. On various occasions, when attempts were made to reconcile the contending parties, Melancthon was willing to make any sacrifice for the sake of peace, short of surrendering the great fundamental doctrines on which the Reformers based their opposition to the corruptions of the Church of Rome. More than once his gentle and peaceful disposition led him to adopt a temporising course, where the more vigorous mind of Luther would have advocated bold and uncompromising measures; but throughout the many years during which these two remarkable men were engaged in this momentous contest, their differences of opinion never caused any serious estrangement; and when Luther was removed from the world in 1546, Melancthon was chosen to pronounce the funeral oration over his grave.

Melancthon survived his friend about fourteen years, and his death at length took place in the year 1560. His character is thus ably summed up by the German historian^b—

"Melancthon had the rare talent of discerning truth in all its most intricate connections and combinations, of comprehending at once the most abstract notions and expressing them with the utmost perspicuity and ease. And he applied this happy talent in religious disquisitions with unparalleled success, insomuch that it may be safely affirmed that the cause of true Christianity derived from the learning and genius of Melancthon more signal advantages and a more effectual support than from any of the other theologians of the age. His love of peace and concord, which was partly owing to the sweetness of his natural temper, made him desire with ardour that a reformation might be effected without producing a schism in the Church, and that the external communion of the contending parties might be preserved uninterrupted and entire. This spirit of mildness and charity, carried, perhaps, too far, led him sometimes to make concessions that were neither consistent with prudence nor advantageous to the cause in which he was engaged. It is, however, certain that he gave no quarter to those more dangerous and momentous errors that reigned in the Church of Rome, but maintained, on the contrary, that their extirpation was essentially necessary, in order to the restoration of true religion. When the hour of real danger approached, when things bore a formidable aspect, and the cause of religion was in imminent peril, this man, usually so timorous, was converted all at once into an intrepid hero, who looked danger in the face with unshaken constancy, and opposed his adversaries with invincible fortitude. Had his courage been more uniform and steady, his desire of reconciling all interests and pleasing all parties less violent and excessive, his triumph over the superstitions imbibed in his infancy more complete, he must deservedly have been considered as one of the greatest among men."

THE POPE'S CANON LAW.—No. I.

MANY of our Roman Catholic readers are probably not aware that the Church of Rome has a canon law which all popes have thought should be in force, and be obeyed, in all Christian countries.

A free Protestant government makes it impossible for the Pope to attempt to put this law in force in Ireland just now; but his policy is to prepare for its introduction into Ireland; and even though this canon law should never come to be put in force in Ireland, yet it is deeply interesting to Roman Catholics, and to Protestants too, to know what sort of a law this canon law is, because it shows us what popes themselves consider to be the legitimate and natural consequences of their own spiritual claims, as vicars of Christ and heads of the Church.

We propose, then, to give, from time to time, some extracts from the canon law of the Church of Rome, showing the nature and foundation of that law.

We quote that law only from the books which are now held in the Roman courts as being of the highest authority in canon law. These are—The Decretals of Pope Gregory IX.; the Sixth Book of Decretals (commonly quoted as "Sext."); the Clementines (so called from Pope Clement V., who collected and authorized them); the Extravagants^a of Pope John XXII.; the Common Extravagants (so called from being a collection from several popes, and not from one pope only).

We do not quote the Decretum of Gratian to establish the canon law of Rome at the present day, because Roman Catholic canonists, being ashamed of its forgeries, do now pronounce it of no authority, though, perhaps, no book ever promoted the interests of the Church of Rome more.

I.—PRIMACY OF THE POPE.

We need not quote authorities to prove that by the law of the Church of Rome, the Bishop of Rome is the head and ruler of all churches, to whom all are bound to yield obedience. It is enough to refer to the Creed of Pope Pius IV. for this:—"I acknowledge the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Roman Church as the mother and mistress of all churches; and I promise and swear true obedience to the Roman Pontiff, the successor of Peter Prince of Apostles, and Vicar of Jesus Christ."

^a Vide Mosheim's Church History, vol. 3, p. 109 London, 1841.
^b The term "Extravagant," means, literally, "Wandering outside," and was applied to such decrees of popes, as were not previously collected into any of the authorized Books of Canon Law.

This is an article of faith with Roman Catholics. Faith must be founded on the authority of God, and not of man; therefore all Roman Catholics believe that the primacy of the bishop of Rome is of divine right—that is, that primacy over the Church was given to him by God, and not by man. This lies at the root of the whole canon law of the Church of Rome.

The following passage is the earliest authority that we can find for the primacy by divine right of the Bishops of Rome:—

"The holy Roman and Apostolic Church received the primacy, not from the Apostles, but from the Lord Himself, our Saviour. . . . This apostolic see was appointed the hinge and head of all churches by the Lord, and not by any other; and as the door is governed by the hinge, so all churches (the Lord so appointing) are governed by the authority of this Holy See."^b This professes to have been written by Anacletus, who succeeded St. Clement as Bishop of Rome about the year 100. The passage, however, is not so old. It was forged in the name of Anacletus, in the eighth century, and is a portion of the forgeries of the notorious Isidore Mercator.

Yet, even so, it is the most ancient authority we can find for the supremacy, by divine right, of the See of Rome. If any Roman Catholic can send us any older authority, which declares that the primacy of the Church of Rome is of divine right, we will, of course, publish it. If no Roman Catholic can find any older authority for the divine right of the supremacy of Rome, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the claim has its origin and foundation in forgery. Still, this claim is the foundation of the Popes' canon law.

II.—TEMPORAL POWER OF THE POPE.

The doctrine that the Bishop of Rome is, by divine right, the head of the Church and the vicar of Christ on earth, naturally led to the conclusion, that all temporal rulers and powers ought to be subject to the authority of the Pope.

Various laws have been made by the Church of Rome to bring all temporal rulers under such subjection to the Pope.

On this point we quote the decree of Pope Boniface VIII., which now forms part of the canon law:—

"We are obliged by the faith to believe and to hold one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, and this we firmly believe and simply confess, out of which there is no salvation, nor remission of sins. . . . And we are instructed by the word of the gospel, that in her power there are two swords, to wit, the spiritual and the temporal. For the Apostles saying, 'Here are two swords,' that is to say, in the church, when the Apostles were speaking, the Lord does not answer, 'It is too much,' but 'It is enough.' Certainly, he who denies that the temporal sword is in the power of Peter, badly attends to the word of the Lord, which sets it forth, 'Put up thy sword into the sheath.' Each, therefore, is in the power of the Church, to wit, the spiritual sword and the material sword. But the one, indeed, is to be exercised for the Church, the other by the Church. The one by the hand of the priest, the other by the hand of kings and soldiers, but at the nod and sufferance of the priest. But it is right that the one sword should be subject to the other, and that temporal authority should be subject to spiritual power.

(Pope Boniface very naturally concludes thus.) Moreover, we declare, say, define, and pronounce, that it is absolutely necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff. Given at the Lateran, in the 8th year of our Pontificate."^d

Such was the law made and published by Pope Boniface. It still stands in the canon law of the Church of Rome.

The Pope does not try to enforce this law everywhere and at all times. He is too wise. But still, it is the law of the Church of Rome, and every one who acts or speaks against it is guilty of violating or opposing the law of the Church of Rome—if guilt it be to do so.

But the Pope always tries to act upon this law wherever he can; and he claims a right to do it whenever he

^b Sacrosancta Romana et apostolica ecclesia non ab apostolis, sed ab ipso Domino Salvatore nostro priusatum obtinuit. . . . Hæc vero apostolica sedes cardo et caput omnium ecclesiarum a Domino, et non ab alio est constituta; et sicut cardine ostium regitur, sic hujus sanctæ sedis auctoritate omnes ecclesie (C. ultimo disponente) reguntur.—Gratian Decret. Dist. 22, c. 2. Collection of Isidore Mercator, in Merlin's Coenilia, p. 17. Lubbe & Co's. Con. Gen., vol. i. 528. Ed. Par. 1871.

^c Matthew xxvi. 52.

^d Unam Sanctam Ecclesiam Catholicam et ipsam apostolicam urgente fide credere cogimur et tenere, nosque hanc firmiter credimus et simpliciter confitemur, extra quam nec salus est, nec remissio peccatorum. . . . In hac ejusque potestate duos esse gladios, spirituales, videlicet, et temporales, evangelicis dictis instrumetur. Nam dicentibus apostolis, ecce gladius duo hic, in ecclesia scilicet, quæ apostoli loquerentur, non respondit Dominus, nimis esse, sed satis. Certe qui in Potestate Petri Temporalem gladium esse negat, male verbum attendit: Domini proferentis, convertit gladium tuum in vaginam. Uterque ergo est in potestate ecclesie, spiritualis scilicet gladius, et materialis. Sed is quidem pro ecclesia, ille vero ab ecclesia exercendus. Ille sacerdotis, is manu regum et militum, sed ad auxilium et patientiam sacerdotis. Oportet autem gladium esse sub gladio, et Temporalem auctoritatem spirituali subici oportet.

Porro subesse Romano Pontifici omni humane creature d. clarum, dicimus, diffinimus, et pronunciamus omnino esse de necessitate salutis.—Dat. Laterani Pont. nostri Ao. viii.

Decree of Pope Boniface VIII. Extravag. commun. Lib. I, Tit. viii., c. 1.

^a Tacitus, Philippe, ac tua studia cura, nec me perturba.—Corpus Reform. Tom. 1, p. 149. Vide D'Aubigne's Hist. of the Reformation, p. 169. Edinburgh, 1847.
^b Christus suus non deest.—Corpus Reform. Tom. 1, p. 104. Vide D'Aubigne, at supra, p. 126.
^c Una est scriptura, castissima spiritus, pura, et per omnia verax.—Contra Eckium Defensio. Corp. Ref. Tom. 1, p. 115.
^d Quid igitur, ipsi secum pugnant, quid mirum?—Ibid.

thinks it safe and prudent. Our readers will, perhaps, remember the various decrees which the present Pope has published within the last few years, annulling, by his apostolic authority, laws made by the temporal governments in Spain, Switzerland, Sardinia, Mexico, New Granada, &c., &c.

And no Pope since the time of Boniface has ever disclaimed this power or condemned this law. Indeed, that could hardly be expected; for it is an awkward thing for one infallible Pope to contradict another infallible Pope in such matters. For it is to be observed that Pope Boniface VIII., in the above decree, was not merely making a law of his own, but was laying down what he believed to be the law of God, contained in the Gospel. He was expounding the words of Jesus Christ, as he judged it necessary for salvation that those words should be understood. If Pope Boniface were not infallible in this, then no Pope can have any claim to be infallible in anything. So the decree of Pope Boniface, once given, must stand for ever; once in the canon law it can never be put out of it. And, indeed, to do justice to Pope Pius IX., he seems to have little desire of putting it out.

The question for Roman Catholics in Ireland to consider is this, whether they would wish to see the canon law in this matter established in Ireland; which it certainly would be, if a Protestant government did not stand in the way.

We think every one must admit that if the Pope be indeed the vicar of Jesus Christ on earth, and infallible in morals as well as in faith, it would be a blessed thing for the world that all temporal governments should be subject to the authority of the Pope.

The Pope has certainly a great opportunity of showing, in the city of Rome itself, the advantage of temporal government being subject to spiritual authority. It is a sad thing that the Romans do not seem to feel this advantage. The presence of an army of French bayonets in Rome for the last eight years, to keep the Romans in subjection to the Pope's temporal government, has a great tendency to prevent the world believing in Pope Boniface VIII., or in Pope Pius IX. either.

III. FREEDOM OF DISCUSSION.

Of course the two swords worked together to suppress freedom of discussion or opinion:—

“We also prohibit, that it shall not be lawful for any lay person to dispute, publicly or privately, concerning the Catholic faith. Whoever shall have done against this, let him be bound with the halter of excommunication.”

This is only the spiritual sword; but the following passage shows how cleverly the two swords are made to help one another in the canon law, for the suppression of freedom of opinion:—

“By the advice of our brethren, we decree that the goods of heretics, who sin more heavily, horribly, and detestably than the aforesaid (incestuous persons, &c.), are confiscated by the same right. But execution of confiscation of this kind, or the seizing of their goods, ought not to be made by princes or other temporal lords, according to the declaration of our predecessor, Pope Gregory, before that sentence concerning that crime (heresy) be promulgated by the bishop of the place, or some other ecclesiastical person who has power concerning this.”

Thus the canon law takes care that the spiritual sword should provide plunder for the temporal sword, in order that the temporal sword, for the sake of plunder, should support the spiritual sword.

If this canon law should come to be admitted in Ireland, and the temporal sword should come to be exercised “at the nod” of Dr. Cullen, the Pope's legate, we fear the CATHOLIC LAYMAN would be cut to pieces with two swords; and we suppose its types and printing-presses would be confiscated and seized. It is, however, a great comfort to us to think that the *Tablet*, *Nation*, and *Freeman's Journal* would certainly share the same fate; for surely Dr. Cullen gave a significant “nod” when he excluded those three newspapers from the “Young Men's Catholic Association.” We do not say this as wishing that those papers should be suppressed, or that freedom of discussion on their side should be prevented; we say it only as consoling ourselves with the assurance that Irish Roman Catholics, who now enjoy liberty under a Protestant government, would join heartily with Protestants in saying that the Bishop of Rome should not be allowed to introduce his canon law into Ireland, or to bring the temporal sword into subjection to the spiritual sword—not even though the Pope should decree, as he has decreed, that this is the true sense of Scripture, and necessary to salvation.

But, then, we ask Roman Catholics to consider that

* Inhibemus quoque, ne cuiquam liceat pers. s. liceat publice vel privatim de fide Catholica disputare. Qui vero contra fecerit, excommunicationis laqueo innodetur.—Decree of Pope Alex. under IV., Sext. lib. 7., tit. ii., c. 2.

† Bona hereticorum, qui gravius, horribiliter, ac detestabiliter quam predicti delinquant, ipsorum re de fratrum nostrorum consilio decretimus confiscata: confiscationis tamen huiusmodi executioni, vel bonorum ipsorum occupatio fieri non debet per principes aut alios dominos temporales juxta Gregorium, Papam predecessorem nostrum, declarationem, auct. quam per episcopum loci, vel aliam personam ecclesiasticam, cum super hoc habuerit potestatem, sententia super eodem crimine fuerit promulgata.—Decree of Pope Boniface VIII., 2-rt. lib. 7., Tit. ii., c. 19.

in that case they could not any longer assert that the Pope is infallible in giving the true sense of Scripture, as necessary to salvation; and we further warn them that the real purpose of making Cardinal Wiseman the Pope's legate in England, and Dr. Cullen the Pope's legate in Ireland, is to prepare, as far as possible, for introducing the Pope's canon law into these countries.

ASCENSION DAY.

We are indebted to the kindness of a friend for the following report of a Sermon preached in the Chapel of Trinity College, Dublin, by the Rev. George Salmon, F.T.C.D., on the 21st May, 1857 (Ascension Day). We are sure it will be acceptable to a large number of our readers.

HEBREWS 10-12.

“But this Man after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.”

THE Old Dispensation was not without a foreshadowing of the event which we celebrate to-day. That prophet, who in his converse with the world, embodied the spirit and power of the forerunner of our Lord, prefigured our Lord Himself in the manner of His triumphant departure from the world. Accordingly, one of the chapters to be read in the service for this evening records how there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, which parted asunder the prophet and his disciple, and how Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. Yet, it is impossible not to be struck with the fact that the tone in which the narrative is related is one of sadness, not of triumph. The sense of the loss which those whom he left behind on earth must sustain is too overpowering to allow them to rejoice in the glory bestowed on their master. The prophets to whom Elijah's removal from the world had been revealed announce the event as a message of bereavement. Elisha, saddened by his own knowledge of his approaching loss, stills, with impatience, the sounds which importunately echo from the lips of one band of prophets after another. “Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day? Yea, I know it. Hold ye your peace.” And when these predictions had found their accomplishment, and the chariot of fire had caught away his master from the gaze of Elisha, so that he saw him no more, the sense of bereavement was his one overpowering feeling. He took hold of his own clothes and rent them in two pieces. Not so, when the cloud received the ascending Saviour out of the sight of His disciples. They worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. We have here an indirect confirmation of the sufficiency of those “infallible proofs” by which the truth of our Lord's resurrection was established. Some forty days before, when He had told them of His speedy return to His Father, they, too, had no thought for anything but their own bereavement. In vain did He remind them that, if they loved Him they would rejoice because He had said He went unto the Father. Still, the fact was, that because He had said these things unto them sorrow had filled their hearts. And when His words had found their accomplishment in that first temporary withdrawal of His presence, no words can describe the gloom into which they were plunged by the eclipse of the Sun of their life. What words can paint the feelings of those who had come together to the sight of that cross of shame as they beat their breasts and returned. Many trials has the Church had since to suffer; but never such as that when faith itself appeared crushed, and hope became extinct, and the promises of God had seemed to fail, and His prophecies had been seen all converging to their fulfilment, and then suddenly seemed to mock them by miserable failure. All these clouds of doubt and sadness were rolled away, never to return, on the resurrection morn. So long did the risen Saviour continue on earth until every tinorous scruple had been removed, and until they who for a time had doubted no longer hesitated to recognise in Him their Lord and their God. When, then, at length, He withdrew His presence, it was from men whose faith had been strengthened, and whose love had been confirmed so that they could show that love by rejoicing in His exaltation. They were no longer perplexed by uncertainties, whether their Lord had gone from them. They needed not to send men to search whether peradventure the Spirit of the Lord had taken their Master up and cast Him upon some mountain or into some valley. They knew He was but fulfilling His own promise to go to prepare a place for them, that where He was there they might be also. Their joy, then, in the glory of their Head was not dimmed by any solicitude for themselves. He had told them that it was expedient for them that He should go away; and so, in fact, it proved. The mantle of the ascending Elijah again falls on them who stand gazing after Him up to heaven. The risen Lord ascending upon high obtains gifts for men; even the presence of that Blessed Comforter who was to abide with the Church for ever. The great joy, then, with which the Apostles celebrated the ascension of their Lord, while still but rejoicing in His glory, and as yet scarcely knowing what blessings that ascension was to draw down upon themselves—that great joy has ever been renewed when the Church with clearer light and fuller knowledge turns back to contemplate the same event. None of her feasts is more deeply imbued with the spirit of holy joy. With joy the cycle of her feasts began. The sounds of earthly mirth chimed in with and almost overpowered her songs

of gladness as she led us to the manger of Bethlehem, and made us see the shepherds offering their devotions and the wise men presenting their gifts, and made us hear the anthems of the heavenly host ascribing glory to God on earth peace, good will toward men. But soon that joy was clouded over. We have been but tracing, under the Church's guidance, the earthly life of Him who was a man of sorrows; and so with Him we, too, must descend into the valley of humiliation. We have followed Him to the scene of His fasting and mysterious temptation: we have seen Him bear the contradiction of sinners and the rejection of those that He came to save. Finally, we have stood around His cross, and with wondering and sorrowing hearts been spectators of that the greatest proof of love that man can display, the giving his life for his friends. And then, again, a season of joy commenced when the grave could not hold its prey, and He whom death had no power to retain overcame death and burst the portals of the tomb. And now we have reached the goal. The days of suffering are over. We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, and in His human nature exalted far above all heavens and raised to the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him. What though it be not now as in that merry Christmas time when all the world seemed ready to echo the Church's hymns of gladness—though now her joys are those in which strangers intermeddle not, and this day the tide of the world's business rolls on regardless of her strains of triumph. Still the grounds for triumph are not the less real. This day our common nature has, in the person of the great Head of the Church, been raised to the highest throne in the universe. Now, as the Apostle tells us, hath God not only raised Christ from the dead, but set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under His feet, and given Him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.

We can see now with what reason it is that our own Church has placed the Ascension so high in the rank of the festivals which she celebrates with most honour. It is one of the four festivals for which proper Psalms are appointed; the other three being Christmas Day, Easter, and Whit Sunday. And it is one of the five for which proper prefaces are appointed in the Communion Service, Trinity Sunday being the fifth in addition to those already mentioned. Bear with me while I dwell a little on this point, and show how completely we are justified in the prominence which we give to this festival by the rank which it has ever held in the Church from the very earliest times. The tracing the history of the feasts of the Church is not a piece of idle antiquarian research. It is intimately connected with the history of doctrine. Could we know at any period of the Church's history what were the facts which she loved best to recal to memory—what the anniversaries which she loved best to celebrate—we should have a key to the knowledge of the whole of her habits of thought and feeling; for dogma has always been quick to find liturgical and ritual forms of expression, and the truths which have been most pondered on, and which have sunk the deepest to the Church's heart, are those also which she will recal most frequently in her services, and celebrate most fondly in her commemorations. Nor is it only this; but these commemorative observances react again upon dogma, and give prominence and permanence to the doctrines which have been celebrated in this way. Perhaps there can be no better illustration of this reaction of ritualism upon dogma than the history of the last new article which the Roman communion have added to their faith: For it was not that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception gave rise to the festival in honour of that event, but precisely the reverse. The origin of the festival was, that certain persons observing that we celebrate not only the feast of our Lord's Nativity, but also that of his Conception, thought that it would be becoming to celebrate not only the day of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, as was usual at the time, but also the day of her Conception. And at a time when the great number thought it a mark of piety to assimilate in every possible way the honours paid to the Blessed Virgin and the honours paid to her Son, the idea found general acceptance. But St. Bernard and others objected to this then novel feast of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin, that the Church only celebrated in her feasts things that are holy, and that to celebrate the conception of one who was conceived in sin like others was to violate this rule, and to honour with the Church's celebrations what was sinful and impure. The force of the objection being acknowledged, and yet the observance of the feast spreading notwithstanding, and becoming general, it was not unnatural that the number should constantly increase of those who repudiated the objection by boldly maintaining that that conception which they saw their Church commemorate with such honour could not be sinful or unclean; and so the festival of the Conception of the Virgin Mary, which appears to have been instituted without the least anticipation of the consequences to which it led, developed itself naturally and almost inevitably into the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception which we have lately seen formally adopted by the Roman Catholic